



Growing Gardens and Confidence

My name is Wendy Vickery, and I have been a WISEWOMAN client since May of 2010. I became a client after meeting Cheryl Griffin, a WISEWOMAN Lifestyle Counselor at District Health Department #10. Due to her willingness to give her time and energy to teach fitness classes in Wellston, I met her and she signed me up as a WISEWOMAN client.

Since becoming a WISEWOMAN client, I have been exposed to and allowed to participate in some wonderful programs. Those being, mainly, but certainly not limited to, the Entrepreneurial Gardening Program and the Secret Shopper Program. The Entrepreneurial Gardening Program was amazing, and I started my first garden in years! While it was slow going due to an odd year weather-wise, I learned an incredible amount and was also able to meet Viki Lorraine, a member of the state WISEWOMAN staff. She signed me up for the Secret Shopper Program where I monitored farmers markets participating in the Senior Market Fresh and WISEWOMAN Market Fresh Programs.

I was able to invest some of the profit I made from doing the Secret Shopper Program in some beads and jewelry making supplies and have started making and selling my own jewelry <http://www.etsy.com/shop/Back WoodsGems> While I am not yet able to support myself doing so, I am making enough money to make a difference in my life.

Several of us in the WISEWOMAN Program are awaiting news on a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant that Ms. Lorraine and a colleague of hers assisted us in applying for. We are attempting to start a collaborative of women gardeners/farmers in the area.

To me personally, the success of this program will mean I no longer drive a minimum of 30 miles simply to get to a job that barely pays enough to pay for the gas to and from the

job. It will give me much needed independence and it has already given me more confidence in myself and my abilities. Even though an unmitigated success will terminate my WISEWOMAN client status, it will allow me to become a mentor to other women who are struggling with low income, lack of a job, low self esteem and poor dietary and exercise habits. It will also mean our gardening cooperative will be able to provide fresh healthy foods at an affordable price to people in our community, an area that desperately needs them. Not to mention the health benefits in my own diet and exercise.

I have also made many friendships that will last a lifetime, people I would not have normally met in the course of my life.

